

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 1315

LIMDIS

S/S CONSIDER PASSING TO SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: XF, IA

SUBJECT: IRAQI POLICY TOWARD MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL INITIATED DIALOGUE
ON MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM AND INVITED FOLLOW-UP FROM USINT.
CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY NO LONGER A PRECONDITION FOR RESUMPTION
OF RELATIONS. USINT REQUESTS INSTRUCTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER BEING INFORMED OF MY PLANS TO ATTEND CONFERENCE
WITH SECRETARY IN AMMAN, FOREIGN MINISTRY DESK OFFICER
FOR NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS, ANBARI, SUMMONED ME TO THE FOREIGN
MINISTRY AUGUST 1 TO CONVEY IRAQI VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST
PROBLEM. I KNOW FROM USUALLY RELIABLE USINT SOURCE WITH
CLOSE LINKS TO IRAQI INTELLIGENCE THAT FOREIGN AFFAIRS
BUREAU OF REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL HAD DEBATED WHETHER
MEETING SHOULD TAKE PLACE. FACT THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY DECIDED
TO SEE ME PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE INDICATES A STEP TOWARD
A MORE ORGANIZED DIALOGUE ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS. THE
FACT THAT ANBARI, RATHER THAN HIGHER LEVEL OFFICIAL, WAS
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ASSIGNED TO SEE ME, INDICATES GOVERNMENTS DESIRE TO OPEN
THE DOOR TO DIALOGUE ONLY A VERY LIMITED DEGREE AT THIS TIME.

3. ANBARI EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK
WITH ME PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE AND SAID THAT DIRECTOR GENERAL
ZAHAWI WOULD WISH TO SEE ME UPON MY RETURN. ANBARI STATED
THE VIEW THAT IRAQI POSITION TOWARD MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT WAS

CLEAR AND SHOULD BE WELL KNOWN TO INTERESTED FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. I REPLIED THAT THIS WAS NOT REALLY TRUE. FOR EXAMPLE, ABSENCE OF NORMAL DIALOGUE LEFT US UNCERTAIN WHETHER GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA ACCURATELY REFLECTED OFFICIAL VIEWS. ANBARI SAID THAT WE SHOULD RELY ON CAREFULLY ARTICULATED STATEMENTS OF DEPUTY RCC CHAIRMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN.

4. ANBARI SUMMARIZED OFFICIAL POSITION AS FOLLOWS: IRAQ DOES NOT OPPOSE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, BUT IT OPPOSES PRESENT EFFORTS TOWARD A SO-CALLED SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD NOT BE A GENUINE SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. A GENUINE SOLUTION, HE SAID, DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ATTAINABLE BY PEACEFUL MEANS. IF THIS WERE WRONG AND GENUINE SOLUTION DID EMERGE FROM PRESENT EFFORTS, IRAQ WOULD BE HAPPY TO SUPPORT IT. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION, ANBARI STATED THAT GENUINE SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE, AS ENVISIONED BY IRAQ AND AS ENUNCIATED BY THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES AT COMMENCEMENT OF PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION, COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY PROVIDING SELF DETERMINATION FOR PALESTINIAN PEOPLE WITHIN PALESTINE. HE REFUSED TO DEFINE WHAT HE MEANT MORE CONCRETELY, BUT HE DID SAY THAT WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI FORCES FROM TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN JUNE 1967 WOULD BE ONLY FIRST STEP TOWARD A REAL SOLUTION. ARABS SHOULD NOT OFFER CONCESSIONS IN FORM OF RELATIONS OR RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL IN RETURN FOR THAT FIRST STEP.

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5. I ASKED ANBARI WHAT THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO DO IN OPPOSITION TO SETTLEMENT IT DID NOT APPROVE. HE REPLIED THAT IRAQI GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS THOSE PALESTINIAN GROUPS (I.E. REJECTION FRONT) WHICH OPPOSE CURRENT SETTLEMENT EFFORTS. IRAQI GOVERNMENT WOULD SUPPORT "LEGITIMATE EFFORTS" OF THOSE PARTIES TO BLOCK PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT. ANBARI DECLINED TO DEFINE "LEGITIMATE EFFORTS".

6. ON SUBJECT OF U.S.-IRAQI RELATIONS, ANBARI WOULD NOT PROVIDE HIS OWN ASSESSMENT OF WHERE WE NOW STAND. HE DID NOT DISSENT, HOWEVER, FROM MY SUMMARY OF WHAT THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION HAD TOLD REUTERS CORRESPONDENT IN RECENT INTERVIEW. IN ESSENCE, IRAQI GOVERNMENT IS STUDYING THE QUESTION OF RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS BUT DOES NOT CONSIDER IT TO BE A CURRENT MATTER, AND A CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST WOULD BE AN ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT. I COMMENTED THAT THE ABOVE FORMULATION DID NOT INDICATE THAT A CHANGE IN U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY WAS A PRECONDITION FOR RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS BUT ONLY THAT IT WAS ONE OF THE FACTORS WHICH IRAQ WOULD TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION. ANBARI DID NOT DEMUR. A FEW DAYS PRIOR TO THIS MEETING DIRECTOR GENERAL

ZAHAWI TOLD ME THAT PRESENT POSITION OF IRAQI GOVERNMENT WITH REGARD TO RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. WAS ONE OF "WATCHFUL WAITING".

7. COMMENT: WHAT ANBARI HAD TO SAY WAS LESS IMPORTANT THAN FACT THAT IRAQI GOVERNMENT MAY BE READY TO ENTER INTO CAUTIOUS DIALOGUE ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUE. THEY REMAIN VERY SHY OF BEING IDENTIFIED WITH SETTLEMENT PROCESS, EVEN AS NEGATIVE SOUNDING BOARD, BUT THEY PROBABLY WANT TO BE BETTER INFORMED. DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONSIDER WHAT I CAN SAY TO ZAHAWI AFTER MY RETURN FROM CONFERENCE IN AMMAN.
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